

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A computer-implemented gaming method, comprising:

(a) identifying a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in association with a player tracking card;

(b) enabling the identified player to configuring a first gaming unit for playing in a tournament, said first gaming unit being selected by a player to play in said a tournament, comprising loadingsaid tournament associated with tournament gaming software to said first gaming unit; and

(c) if the identified player selects to play in the tournament:

(i) receiving from said first gaming unit, an identifier associated with a tournament game card, at a controller comprising a processor and a memory from said first gaming unit, wherein the tournament is in progress when the identifier is received, wherein the identifier is associated with a tournament game card, and wherein the tournament game card is provided to the player in response to paying a fee and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(ii) determining whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic; and

(iii) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(A) determining a time duration the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament in progress, said determined time duration being based on the identifier, if the identifier is determined to be authentic;

(B) initializing a timer with the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(C) starting the timer;

- (D) enabling the first gaming unit to play in the tournament for each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration;
- (I) determining a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes;
- (II) determining any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and
- (III) displaying any determined award to if the identifier is determined to be authentic, thereby allowing the identified player to use the first gaming unit to join the tournament in progress;
- (E) stopping the timer after one of:
- (I) the timer has run for the amount of time of said determined time duration, or and
- (II) when the identified player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;
- (F) receiving determining and displaying a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;
- (G) determining if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, if any said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player; and
- (H) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament, determining is determined, generating data indicative of a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

Claim 2 (currently amended): A-The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier is printed on the tournament game card.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier is electronically encoded on the tournament game card.

Claims 4 to 5 (canceled).

Claim 6 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein determining the time duration based on the identifier comprises retrieving the time duration from storage based on the identifier.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein determining the time duration based on the identifier comprises decoding the identifier to determine the time duration.

Claim 8 (canceled).

Claim 9 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, further comprising:

stopping the timer at a request of the identified player; and

restarting the timer at a request of the identified player if the timer has not run for the determined amount of time.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 9, further comprising:

storing an indication of a remaining amount of time for the player to play in the tournament after the timer stops; and

re-initializing the timer based on the stored indication of the remaining amount of time before the timer restarts.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 10, further comprising:

receiving the identifier from a second gaming unit after the timer stops;

determining whether the identifier received from the second gaming unit is authentic;

wherein re-initializing the timer comprises re-initializing the timer if the identifier received from the second gaming unit is determined to be authentic; and

enabling the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the timer is running.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 11, wherein the timer comprises a first timer implemented by the first gaming unit and a second timer implemented by the second gaming unit;

wherein initializing the timer comprises initializing the first timer; wherein enabling the first gaming unit comprises enabling the first gaming unit while the first timer is running;

wherein re-initializing the timer comprises initializing the second timer; and

wherein enabling the second gaming unit comprises enabling the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the second timer is running.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 81, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the first gaming unit.

Claim 14 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 81, ~~wherein the first gaming unit is operatively coupled to the tournament game card,~~ wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the tournament game card.

Claim 15 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 81, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the-a tournament server.

Claim 16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the tournament gaming software comprises at least one of an executable file, a configuration file, a data file, a pay table, and a plurality of seeds for a random number generator.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the tournament game card comprises at least one of a magnetic swipe card, a smart card, a PC card, and a portable memory device.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein receiving-determining the tournament score of the identified player comprises receiving-determining the tournament score of the identified player before a timer has stopped.

Claim 20 (currently amended): The computer-implemented A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein receiving-determining the tournament score of the identified player comprises receiving-determining the tournament score of the identified player after a timer has stopped.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A tournament server, comprising:
a network interface operatively coupled to a network;
a controller operatively coupled to the network interface, the controller comprising
a processor and a memory operatively coupled configured to operate with the processor,
the controller configured to:

(a) identify a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in
association with a player tracking card;

(b) receive from a first gaming unit and, via the network interface, an
identifier associated with a tournament game card from a first gaming unit,
wherein the identifier is associated with a tournament game card, wherein the
tournament game card is provided to a the identified player in response to paying
a fee and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(c) determine whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit
is authentic;

(d) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(i) determine a time duration the identified player may play in a
tournament that is in progress, said determined time duration being based
on the identifier and time remaining in the tournament, if the identifier is
determined to be authentic;

(ii) initialize a timer with the amount of time of said determined
time duration;

(iii) start the timer;

(iv) enable the first gaming unit for play in the tournament for
each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration if the
identifier is determined to be authentic;

(A) determine a tournament game outcome from a
plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(B) determine any award associated with the determined
tournament game outcome, and

(C) display any determined award to the identified player;

(v) stop the timer after one of:

(A) the timer has run for the amount of time of said time duration, or

(B) when the identified player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(vi) receive determine and display a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;

(vii) determine if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player, if any; and

(viii) if the identified player is the winning player of the tournament is determined, generate data indicative of determine a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player,

Claims 22 to 23 (canceled).

Claim 24 (currently amended): A—The tournament server according to claim 21, wherein the controller is configured to retrieve determine the time duration from storage based on the identifier.

Claim 25 (currently amended): A—The tournament server according to claim 21, wherein the controller is configured to decode the identifier to determine the time duration.

Claim 26 (canceled).

Claim 27 (currently amended): A—The tournament server according to claim 26, wherein the controller is configured to:

stop the timer at a request of the player; and restart the timer at a request of the player if the timer has not run for the determined amount of time.

Claim 28 (currently amended): A—The tournament server according to claim 27, wherein the controller is configured to:

store an indication of a remaining amount of time for the player to play in the tournament after the timer has been stopped; and

re-initialize the timer based on the stored indication of the remaining amount of time before the timer is restarted.

Claim 29 (currently amended): A—The tournament server according to claim 28, wherein the controller is configured to:

receive the identifier from a second gaming unit after the player stopped the timer; determine whether the identifier received from the second gaming unit is authentic;

re-initialize the timer if the identifier received from the second gaming unit is determined to be authentic; and

enable the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the timer is running.

Claims 30 to 60 (canceled).

Claim 61 (currently amended): A non-transitory computer readable medium including computer executable program code for instructing a computer to operate as follows:

(a) identify a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in association with a player tracking card, said first gaming unit configured for playing in a tournament;

(b) receive from the first gaming unit an identifier associated with a tournament game card at a controller comprising a processor and a memory from a first gaming unit configured for playing in a tournament, wherein the tournament is in progress when the identifier is received, wherein the identifier is associated with a tournament game card, and wherein the tournament game card is provided to the identified player in response to paying a fee and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(c) determine whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic;

(d) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(i) determine a time duration the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament in progress, said determined time duration being based on the identifier, if the identifier is determined to be authentic;

(ii) initialize a timer with the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(iii) start the timer;

(iv) enable the first gaming unit to play in the tournament for each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration;

(A) determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(B) determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(C) display any determined award to if the identifier is determined to be authentic, thereby allowing the identified player to use the first gaming unit to join the tournament in progress;

(V) stop the timer after one of:

(A) the timer has run for the amount of time of said determined time duration, and/or

(B) when the player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(vi) receive determine and display a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;

(vii) determine if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player if any; and

(viii) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament is determined, generate data indicative of determine a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

Claim 62 (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for allowing enabling a player to join a tournament in progress using a device, said method comprising:

(a) identifying a player of a first device, said player identified in association with a player tracking card;

(b) receiving, from the identified player who has selected the first device to play in a tournament between multiple players, at-a-controller comprising a processor and a memory, a tournament identifier associated with a tournament game card a player who has selected a first device to play in a tournament between multiple players, wherein the tournament is in progress when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(c) determining based on the tournament identifier and the time that the tournament identifier is received whether to allow enable the player to join the tournament;

(d) determining, based on the tournament identifier, a tournament duration indicative of a time duration that the player may play in the tournament in the time remaining in the tournament when it is determined to allow enable the player to join the tournament; and

(e) if the first device is not configured for playing the tournament when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament and it is determined to enable the player to join the tournament based on the tournament identifier, configuring the first device to join the tournament;

(f) enabling the first device to join the tournament for tournament play by the player for the determined tournament duration, wherein each play of a thereby allowing the player to use the first device to join the tournament game in progress and played in the tournament for the determined tournament duration includes:

(i) determining a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(ii) determining any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

- (iii) displaying any determined award to the identified player; and
- (g) upon a conclusion of the tournament:
- (i) determining and displaying a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game,
- (ii) determining if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player, and
- (iii) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament, determining a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

wherein the first device is not configured for playing the tournament when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament; and

configuring the first device to join the tournament after the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament and it is determined to allow the player to join the tournament based on the tournament identifier and the determination of said time duration that the player may play in the tournament in the time remaining in the tournament.

Claim 63 (canceled).

Claim 64 (currently amended): A—The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 62, wherein the determining of whether to allowenable the player to join the tournament comprises:

determining whether the tournament identifier has been received within a acceptable time window allocated for tournament play.

Claim 65 (currently amended): A—The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 62, further comprising:

receiving a request from the player to stop playing the tournament; and

determining and storing the time left for that player to play in the tournament as the player's remaining time in the tournament, thereby allowing the player to resume tournament play using the first device and/or a second device.

Claim 66 (currently amended): A—The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 65, further comprising:

receiving at a controller comprising a processor and a memory an identifier from a second gaming device, wherein the second device has been selected by the player to play in the tournament;

determining, based on the identifier a second tournament duration that the player may play in the time remaining in the tournament; and

enabling the second device to play in the tournament for the second tournament duration, thereby allowing the player to use the second device to join the tournament in progress and play in the tournament for the determined amount of time for the player to play the tournament duration.

Claim 67 (currently amended): A computing system including at least one or more processors programmed to adapt for and/or capable of:

identifying a player in association with a player tracking card;

receiving receive a tournament game card from the identified player, at a controller comprising a processor and a memory a—the tournament game card associated with a tournament identifier, said receiving of the tournament game card associated with a player who has effectively representing a requested to join a tournament in progress by presenting the tournament identifier, wherein the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

determining determine based on the tournament identifier received whether to allow enable the identified player to join the tournament;

determiningdetermine, based on the tournament identifier, a tournament time duration that the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament when it is determined to allow enable the identified player to join the tournament;

initializing initialize a timer with the amount of time of said tournament time duration;

starting the timer;

for each play of a enabling the computing system and/or another computing system for tournament game play by the player for the determined tournament time duration;

(a) determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(b) determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(c) display any determined award to the identified player;

, thereby allowing the player to join the tournament in progress and play in the tournament for the tournament duration; and

stopping the timer after one of:

(a) the timer has run for the amount of time of said tournament time duration or and

(b) when the player terminates play on said computing system for tournament play prior to expiration of the amount of time of said tournament time duration.

Claim 68 (currently amended): A-The computing system as recited in claim 67, wherein said computing system includes at least one or more of the following:

- a gaming machine;
- a gaming server comprising said controller; and
- a portable gaming device.